

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

No. 52

APRIL, 1925.

Price 4d.

OUT OF THE RUT

IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES IN BRIEF

Following the campaign in the "Labour Organiser" in favour of organised schemes for widely extending the individual membership, frequent instances reach us where local Parties have adopted one or other of the schemes we have explained—in almost all cases the adoption of a scheme embarked upon in earnest has been an immediate success. Four figure individual membership is now the proud boast of quite a number of local Labour Parties. The latest message to hand is from the Swindon Labour Party, where the membership now reaches a total of 1,700. The Party is aiming at attaining 5,000 from its present campaign. In this case an organised door-to-door general canvass has been arranged, canvassing being done not from any pre-arranged list of names but entirely "on the raw." The Canvass, in fact, instead of being a canvass for a particular candidate is just a canvass to secure members. And it is proving mightily successful.

We have received several samples of combined election addresses and photo cards used by the Ardwick Labour Party in the Guardians' Elections. The cards are roughly 8½in. x 5in., the election address of the candidate being printed on the back. The front bears the usual "Vote For" and the photograph of the candidate. The cards excel in one respect in which Election Agents are often negligent, i.e., the halftone blocks have each been made of sufficiently wide screen to allow of a creditable reproduction of the candidates' features instead of the blotchy inkiness that so often passes muster. Respecting these cards the Agent, Mr. T. M. Larrad, writes:—

"We are running a Guardians' Election for the Ardwick Ward of the Manchester Board, and I am enclosing a card election address, as you may be interested. I have used the card several times and I think it has the following advantages over the usual folded 8vo. paper. (1) It is "something

different" and, therefore, attracts attention; (2) It is easily slipped under the door where folk are not at home, thus saving covering ground twice; (3) The children in the house are not likely to tear it up; it "looks good," not merely a bit of paper; (4) It makes a good window display, as it will stand up on the sill or sash; (5) The husband can't light his pipe with it, as it will not burn well; (6) The chances are if there is any sympathy at all with Labour the photo card will be propped up on the mantelshelf or tucked in the corner of a picture frame and be a constant reminder till election day; (7) My experience is that the card is often kept after an election where a paper photo is thrown away; I have often found these cards inserted in photo albums or in a cheap frame on the kitchen shelf, all of which means advertisement.

"The cards cost very little more than a 4pp. 8vo. address, about 6d. to 1/- per thousand extra."

Taken in the main, we thoroughly agree with Mr. Larrad as to the effectiveness and general convenience of the style of card used by him. It is particularly useful in closely packed industrial areas, and for long rows of houses in streets. When one comes, however, to more rural or even the semi-urban scattered areas, the Election Agent has always to weigh up the advantages of window display and general distribution with billposting and postal work, and generally a compromise of method is then indicated.

The balance sheet of the Newport Labour Hall, Ltd., is to hand, and the report and figures read very much like a piece of wizardry. This enterprising institution, though only established within the last three or four years, now owns two substantial and lavishly equipped club premises, together with an institute. The now famous, or infamous, critic of Labour who gravely announced that Labour couldn't manage a coffee-stall would be well advised to take a trip to Newport to

discover what Labour has managed to do there. The accounts of the two central establishments show receipts of over £9,000 from sales, and the profit and loss accounts are really astonishing reading. Among the proceeds we note such items as £941, proceeds of dances, £150 13s. proceeds of whist drives, £243 for hire of room and rent, £726 donations, while the nett profit carried to the nett revenue account is roughly £2,000, the total nett profit for the year amounting to £2,528 33s. 1d.—£1,000 in excess of the share capital! The secretary of the club is Mr. W. B. Lewcock, Labour Agent, and an interesting commentary on the excellent spirit pervading is that the Management Committee and all subsidiary committees work entirely on a voluntary basis.

Our readers will all have rejoiced with us in the famous victory gained at the County Council elections in Durham, where once again Labour possesses a majority. The way in which the victory was brought about is of interest to our readers, and we have been delighted to go through a small budget of election literature, which was produced by the Durham County Federation of Divisional Labour Parties, the secretary of which is Mr. J. W. Foster, Fern House, Chilton Lane, Ferryhill Co. Durham. We hope next month to be able to reproduce certain special blocks that were prepared for the election in conjunction with Mr. T. Summerbell, Printer, of Sunderland. In addition there were a number of leaflets, some of which were referred to in our last issue and a model election address printed with a particularly attractive illustrated border. Candidates' notes were also issued, together with a speakers' list, the latter being published in handy book form and contained the names of no less than 346 speakers. The whole comprises a most creditable piece of work which must have involved considerable preparation and sacrifice on the part of the authors.

The Croydon Labour Party which has to handle a huge electorate of 100,000 electors has, as we can quite understand, found the handicap at election times of not possessing the names and addresses of the trade unionists who pay the political levy in its area.

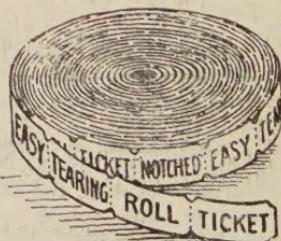
Mr. H. S. Redgrove, the Agent and Organiser, some time ago issued a suitable letter to the branches for the purpose of getting the information required, and this has been followed up by personal interviews with branch secretaries where necessary. We understand that the result is that the required information is coming in very nicely, and cards have been prepared for individually indexing the trade unionists in suitable divisions of Ward and Polling Districts. The possession of a card index of the trade unionists in any Division places at the disposal of the Organiser or Election Agent several powerful means to educate and immediately influence the great potent mass of organised workers to reach whom is often to attain victory. The cards used in this case have been drafted so that other information concerning trade unionists such as individual membership of the L.P., membership of the I.L.P., etc., can be noted together with anything else that experience may prove to be of use. A little detail is that the cards are dated at the time of writing, a point that may readily prove a useful guide in future years.

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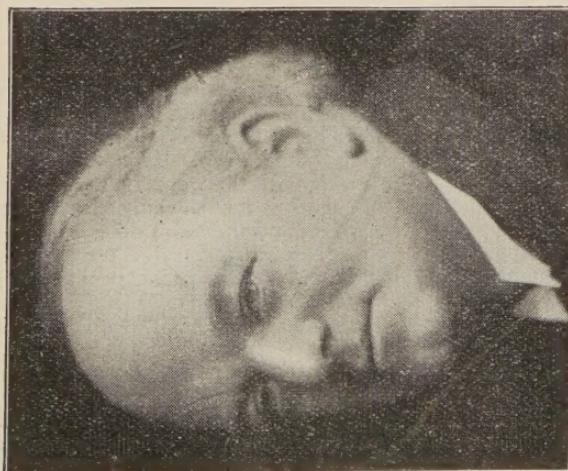
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for to-morrow.”

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THE SECRETARY'S PAGE

HELP AND HINTS IN SEASON.

Our correspondence and other evidence continue to show that in some districts the representation of individual members on the General Committee of the Party still gives rise to misunderstanding and friction. There are instances (in every case in our experience places which are backward areas) where the Labour Party constitution is so much misunderstood, or ignored, that individual members sit as a right on the General Committee alongside Trade Union representatives properly appointed. Some people simply cannot see the hopeless want of democracy in according to an individual the same voice and voting power as is accorded to another person who may represent a hundred individuals. Fortunately, the need for vastly extending the individual membership eventually proves even to the most obtuse mind that the constitutional method is the best and only practical one, and that individual members must be represented by their own *elected* representatives and not be each and every one a "representative" of himself.

With the vast development of Local Labour organisations during the past few years there are now several thousand Local Labour Parties, and probably several thousand more ward organisations and individual sections. In practically all cases those smaller organisations take their name from localities totally unknown to persons resident in other parts of the country, and a practical difficulty is presenting itself in correspondence (we experience it ourselves) inasmuch as the postal addresses of the secretaries are often insufficiently given. May we advise local secretaries to remember that though their small town or village is well known locally, there may be many others of the same name in the country, and the full postal address ought to be printed on letter heads. Unfortunately a Local Party often has its own letter heads without indicating the Divisional Party under which it falls, and here confusion is even more easily attained.

A mode of selling tickets, if it may be so described, has been recently adopted

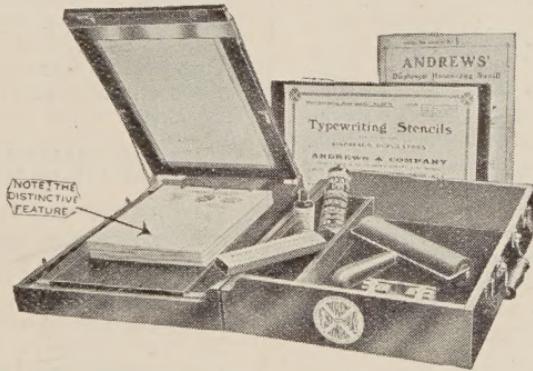
by some Parties, which seems to simplify the problem of collecting in the ticket money after a meeting—which difficulty most secretaries have had experience of. In the plan mentioned, the meeting is advertised mainly by printed tickets which are well distributed gratis, the price, however, being put at the foot, with the injunction, "*Please pay at the door.*" The system mentioned might not be suitable for a tea party or similar affair where catering is to be done, but for a public meeting for which a charge is to be made, the method certainly has its advantages. One of the best ways of advertising is by means of free tickets, but where tickets have to be sold obviously a second and third lot of printing has to be done by way of additional advertising. The free ticket where one pays at the door offers a unique method of advertising, while at the same time yielding the money income promptly.

Is it not time that we had an "earlier meeting campaign" in the Labour Party? It is a surprising thing that in some parts of the country Party meetings and even public meetings can be held as early as six o'clock in the evening and with success. But in other places meetings are convened for eight o'clock, in the expectation that by 8.30 p.m. a start might be made. It is true that in most places where the earliest meetings are arranged the area is a mining one, but the difference in the lateness of workers' hours does not account for the whole of the disparity in commencing times. Late meeting times are a legacy of the fifty-four and sixty hour week. They are not in keeping with the workers' hours to-day. The truth is that slovenly methods have crept in, and the habit once learned has never been thrown off. We are unable to understand the persistence of the late meeting, for not only have workers' hours shortened, but the whole habit of evening town life, at any rate in the provinces, has largely mended for the better during recent years. Shopping hours, for instance, have been greatly curtailed. Not only can shop assistants now attend meetings earlier, but others have not the excuse that they had to

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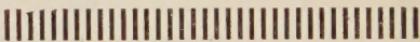
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stay out shopping. The street parades in almost all parts of the country cease at a far earlier hour than they did when shopping ran into late hours, and on Saturdays even into Sunday morning. If the streets are quieter and people go to bed earlier, why should Labour meetings be held and continue at hours which defy the popular tendency? Are workers brains as active and efficient at 10 p.m. as they would be at 8 p.m.? Frankly, we don't think so, and the needless expense of late lighting, heating and stewarding are also a factor in the case.

One other bane of Labour meetings is the person who, when the chairman is about to close down, always has some new apple of discord to introduce under "other business." Why "other business" is put on the agenda at all passes comprehension. Why should it be possible for some friend in a dwindling meeting to introduce an important question which demands adequate discussion and yet cannot possibly get it? One suspects that it is that latter fact which is often the dominating factor! At least if "other business" is to be introduced, notice ought to be insisted upon at the commencement of the meeting, and the same duly announced so that discussion may be shaped accordingly. Some of the worst sinners in the direction above referred to are people who ought long ago to have learnt better. But a wise chairman will not permit of the abuse of facilities by letting meetings drag on for the pleasure of some comrade who wants to spring a surprise discussion on a tired gathering.

An even more artful dodger is the man who has an "emergency" resolution. It is wonderful what a lot of sins an "emergency" can cover up! But in nine cases out of ten there is no sort of emergency at all about the resolution, while in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, whether the resolution is passed or no won't make a continental difference. Emergency resolutions are sometimes a dodge to get the full attention of a meeting to the exclusion actually of the business for which the meeting has been called. Such motions are rarely well based, they are often founded on misstatements of fact, while if properly discussed legitimate business suffers. We have no mercy or sympathy for them.

Quite recently we heard of a case where, four months after the Labour Government had ceased, a comrade wanted to introduce an emergency resolution expressing censure on Mr. MacDonald and his Government! Even if his resolution had been in time we doubt if the fall of Cabinets is ever much effected by emergency resolutions. But surely if ever there was a subject of which notice should be given and on which adequate discussion should take place it should be on a resolution by which a constituent part of the Labour Party is to so foul its own nest as to publicly pass censure on its leaders. Not that such censure is to be excluded if necessary, but surely all aspects of such a question require the deepest consideration, including the effect of such action on the prospects of the Party who are asked to pass the resolution.



BACK COPIES OF THE "LABOUR ORGANISER."

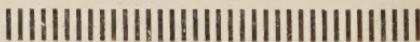
From time to time numberless requests have reached us for back copies of the "Labour Organiser." In a very large number of cases we have regretfully been compelled to reply that we have been sold out of the number asked for.

We are fortunate in having recently been able to acquire two or three copies of practically every issue of the "Labour Organiser," and would be glad if readers who are short of copies will immediately apply for same forwarding with their order cash at the rate of 4½d. per copy (including postage). Early application is necessary.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

FEBRUARY COPIES WANTED

Will our customers who take wholesale supplies please notify us of any back copies of the February number they have on hand. This number was sold completely out and we should be pleased to receive any copies our friends have on hand and to allow full credit for same.



SOME REPORTS AND BALANCE SHEETS

We have received a number of balance sheets from Local and Divisional Labour Parties to the senders of which we desire to express thanks. In a large number of cases, however, it is impossible to give a notice in this column because of the lack of explicit description of items both in receipts and payments. Unfortunately, in certain balance sheets, some of the descriptions applying to income and expenditure items are hopelessly unintelligible. We presume that those to whom the balance sheet is presented are able to understand the items, though we doubt it, and we would appeal to secretaries and treasurers to present balance sheets so that even the new and uninitiated member may know what is meant. In some cases the description is entirely misleading unless items have been entered in the wrong place. This confusion is not as things should be, and there is room generally for a vast improvement.

In this connection we would like to draw attention to a circular recently issued by the Executive of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, which reads as follows :—

28th January, 1925.

"Dear Sir or Madam,—Attention has been called to the rather unbusinesslike methods of dealing with accounts in certain Local Labour Parties, and the Scottish Executive requests me to advise Local Labour Parties accordingly that so far as possible the constitution should be strictly adhered to regarding the appointment of the several officials : Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Auditors, and the strict performance of their respective duties ; a duly audited balance sheet being presented to the annual meeting, and a statement made by the Treasurer up to date, at least quarterly. All accounts should be presented at an executive meeting and duly certified by the officials concerned, to be passed for payment by the Treasurer. The Auditors should examine not only the balance sheet and ledger or cash book, but also duplicate receipt books, and auxiliary note books containing such matters as details of collecting and membership cards, tickets given out for sale, i.e., subscription, concert or other tickets, etc. Any surplus monies above, say £3,

should be banked in the most convenient bank, but preferably the Savings Bank or Co-operative Store. And it is particularly important that monies raised for election purposes should be strictly dealt with, so as to avoid misunderstanding, which often arises in quite innocent circumstances."

The Deptford Labour Party (Secretary and Agent, Ald. W. H. Green, J.P.) appear to be a particularly flourishing body. From the annual report we note that the Party are justly proud of the nearly 22,000 electors who stood solid for Labour at the General Election, and of the handsome majority of 3,624 secured for their member the Rt. Hon. C. W. Bowerman. We note with pleasure that the individual membership shows an increase of nearly 50 per cent. on last year, and now stands at 1,400. No less than 800 of these members pay weekly or monthly payments by and through collectors. General organisation has improved, and new ventures such as a Young Labour League, Labour Choir and Tennis Club have been started. Turning to the balance sheet, we note that the gross income reaches £1,585 (the accounts do not include the election account). The balance brought forward was £289, and this at the end of the year had been increased to £337 ; apparently there were also bank deposits accumulated during the year as follows :—Guarantee Fund £200, Fighting Fund £150, General Fund £100. The income shows several most satisfactory items ; thus, no less than £412 was received from subscriptions, affiliations and donations ; while dances turned in £450 of which nearly £200 appears to have been profit. Altogether the financial document before us is a very healthy one.

The accounts of the Bristol East Labour Party make cheering reading. The weakest part of the report is that dealing with individual membership, which, nevertheless, now stands at 521 an increase for the year of 171. The affiliated membership is approximately 10,000, so that assuming the bulk of these to be men there must be a big field open among the women. We note that the Party are alive to this and a big effort is being made. During the two

registration periods no less than 287 claims were put upon the voters' list, and the agent was responsible for placing the names of 43 railway guards upon the absent voters' list, thus enabling them to record their vote by post during the General Election.

There are four women sections in Bristol East, while as a demonstration of the genuineness of the ward organisation we note that two of the wards actually have their own headquarters. Apart from the General Election some 25,000 leaflets or other literature was distributed during the year, and it is not surprising, therefore, to see that the Party has improved its position municipally. During the General Election, which, as our readers will remember, resulted in a handsome win for Mr. W. Baker, no less than 32,000 persons were canvassed and the information tabulated. Will those who deny themselves all the advantages of such work and lose their elections accordingly, please note? Mark also that Mr. Baker's majority was increased by over 2,000 votes. We observe with satisfaction that the balance sheet is accompanied by financial statements from each of the wards and individual sections.

The Dartford Divisional Labour Party (Secretary and late Temporary Agent, Mr. R. Cross) present a most interesting and intelligible report of the year's work, accompanied by a very detailed financial statement. During the year the individual membership has practically doubled, and is now approximately 1,500. As the direct result of a special campaign during which Labour Party leaflets and duplicated letters were issued to about 4,000 people, 400 members were made. Although the Executive think that a better follow-up by their workers would have secured a higher return this 10 per cent. of members secured is really a very creditable result. We note that there has been a failure of voluntary collections and that collectors on a commission basis have now been appointed. The report rightly rejoices in the fact that individual members' subscriptions have increased from £15 in 1922 and £40 in 1923 to £100 in 1924. Offices and headquarters have been secured for the Party during the year, which have been adequately furnished and the telephone installed. The possession of a furnished office always seems to

impress the hall-mark of stability upon any Party, and we particularly congratulate the Dartford Labour Party on their enterprise here. We note also that it has been decided to run two bazaars during 1925.

We have been privileged to see a report of the Party's annual conference from which we note that 61 organisations were represented and besides the routine business done several resolutions on public matters were dealt with.

AGENTS' ASSOCIATION NEWS.

This is the period of annual dinners. The South Wales and South-Western District of the Labour Agents' Association held their annual dinner at Cardiff on Thursday, the 26th March, when a good company sat down. The annual meeting had been held in the afternoon, at which a good deal of business was done. The General Secretary was present and delivered an educational lecture, which was afterwards followed by a good discussion. The dinner festivities included the usual short toast list and appropriate speeches. Mr. W. B. Lewcock presided.

The annual dinner of the London and Near Counties District is to take place on the 25th April at the Shaftesbury Hotel. We understand that the invited guests will be the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes, M.P., Mr. J. S. Middleton, Ald. H. Morrison, and the President and Secretary of the Agents' Association. Quite an important company is expected for London M.P.s and candidates both for Parliamentary duties and the important London governing bodies make a point of attending the Agents' Dinner.

The Lancashire and Cheshire District of the Agents' Association hold their annual meeting on 1st May, this to be followed by a high tea and concert. The Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, M.P., and the General Secretary have promised to attend. At the afternoon meeting Mrs. Anderson is to open a discussion on "General Literature of the Party as distinct from Election Literature."

At the last meeting of the London Agents, Mr. W. S. Rainbird lectured on "Telling the Tale in Print." A brief report appears elsewhere in this issue.

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HOW TO RUN A SPEAKERS' CLASS

By WILLIAM HOWARD, M.A., Organising Secretary of Leicester Labour Party.

It will be agreed by most folks that it is vitally necessary to maintain, and, if possible, increase, the supply of speakers in the Movement. And it is every day becoming clearer that local Parties will have increasingly to rely on their own resources so far as platform work is concerned. It is not every Party that can do this, but every Party could in time do it if it set about the systematic training of its members in the arts and graces of public speaking.

It is sometimes assumed that the capacity for public speech is a gift, and that no amount of training will make a man into an effective speaker. Such is not the case. Everyone with normal command of his vocal powers and a sufficiency of intelligence can learn to speak. Some, of course, learn the art more readily than others, and some start with the initial advantage of possessing natural graces of deportment, voice and gesture which add greatly to their platform effectiveness, but nevertheless, it is true to say that speaking is largely a matter of application and practice.

Oratory is no longer the vogue. Windy prolixity has gone out of fashion. What the Movement needs is men and women who can state the Labour case calmly, intelligently and logically without that "sound and fury" which, as Shakespeare justly observes, "signify nothing." That, I believe, is within the compass of every man and woman with the necessary substratum of culture who is willing to learn. Because of that belief I contend that a Speakers' Class is an essential feature of every well-conducted party.

Naturally the most important functionary in a Speakers' Class is the tutor. He need not necessarily be an orator just as a competent teacher of singing need not himself be a great vocalist. But he must, if he is to get the best out of his students, be capable of teaching, which is one of the most difficult of the arts ; he must also be tactful ; and, what is extremely important, he must have a ready command of correct English. A tutor who cannot speak his own language without contravening the laws of syntax is obviously not suited to the task he has undertaken. I would

say that the best tutor is one who has had scholastic experience.

It is not necessary to use a text-book. One cannot learn to speak by reading a book. A speaker who has gained the necessary confidence to face an audience may, perhaps, pick up a few "wrinkles" about speech construction from a book, but no amount of reading will make a nervous novice into a practised speaker. The tutor will, however, wish to consult the authorities, and the book I have found most useful for the purpose is "Public Speaking and Chairmanship," by G. E. O'Dell, which is unfortunately out of print. Incidentally may I suggest to some of our Labour publishing firms that it would be a paying proposition to re-issue it for this little treatise is a model of its kind. George Jacob Holyoake's standard work too, contains much helpful information. I certainly, however, would not work in the class from a text-book. What the teacher must do, is to get his pupils on their feet. He must by hook or crook get them speaking, for one can learn to speak only by doing it.

Let me describe briefly the method I employ and which by experience I have found the most effective.

Each of the students takes the chair in turn and makes a few introductory remarks. I then speak on some aspect of public speaking for fifteen or twenty minutes, my observations being culled from my own experience or from the books already referred to. At the conclusion of my remarks I encourage the students to question me so that any point not wholly understood may be elaborated and cleared up.

Then two of the students give each a speech on a given subject which they have had a week to prepare. Each effort is supposed to occupy ten minutes, but it very often peters out long before the prescribed period is up. That, however, does not matter. The important thing is that the initial step has been taken. Confidence will progressively grow with each succeeding effort.

After these two speeches, the subject is thrown open for discussion, in which every member of the class is expected to take part, even if only to the extent of a

few sentences. I may say that the members are encouraged to criticise or commend as the case may be, not only the matter but the manner of the openers.

Finally, I wind up, giving particular attention to the method of delivery. The chairman, subject and speakers are selected for the next night, and the session closes with a vote of thanks to the chairman. This, as I said, is the method I have found most effective. My aim is not to teach elocution. That would be a sheer waste of time. What I aim at is to develop confidence without which no one can make a speech, and which comes only from practice. If I don't get all my pupils on their feet reasonably often I have failed. So I should say to every tutor of a Speakers' Class—don't, at the beginning, worry about elocution or even about grammar. Get your students on their feet and having achieved that you may then pro-

ceed to the finer points of articulation, phrasing and so on.

There is one thing, however, I keep insisting on, and that is that a speech, if it is to be successful, must be built up on a carefully thought-out plan. I devote a good deal of time to speech construction and the making of notes, because I consider it vital. Personally, I am sick of the haphazard, rambling, incoherent jumble of ideas that very often passes muster for a speech in the Labour and other Movements. And so I fancy are a good many others.

I also point out to my pupils, and encourage them to try to eradicate any errors in grammar or localisms that recur in their remarks. This must be done with the requisite tact, but I have always found it welcomed. In this connection it is understood that nothing that passes in the class is to be the subject of conversation outside. Without such a rule it would be impossible to carry on.

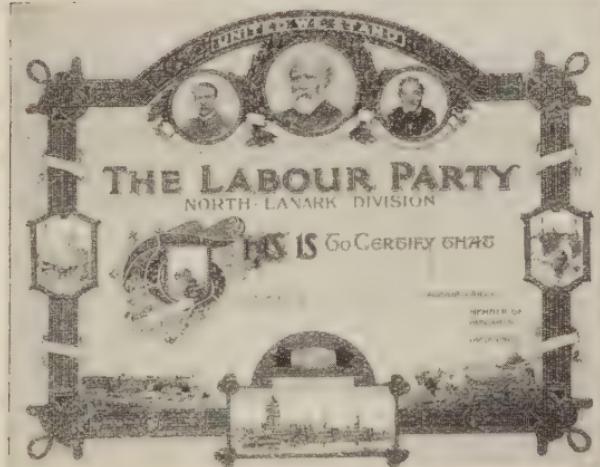
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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

NON-RESIDENCE OF URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR.

Question.—I am asked whether you would give advice on the following point: A person by virtue of being a Local Government elector, is elected to an Urban District Council, for a term of three years. During his term of office, this particular person's name is taken off the register for Local Government electors, and he is not qualified in any other way for the position of a Councillor. Is such a one required to retire from his position on the Council, or can he retain his seat for the remainder of the term for which he was elected?

Answer.—The fact that the District Councillor referred to has merely ceased to be a Local Government elector does not in the present state of the law disqualify him from continuing as Councillor to the end of his term, though he would not, of course, be eligible for re-election. The point is governed by Section 46 of the Local Government Act, 1894, which lays down the disqualification for being elected "or being a member" of a Council of a district other than a borough. Of course, should the member be absent from meetings of the Council for more than six months consecutively, except in case of illness or for some reason approved by the Council, his office becomes vacant. We take it this is not likely to arise in the case under notice.

Now in case any of our readers should jump to a wrong conclusion, it is necessary to point out that the answer to our correspondent applies to an *Urban* District Councillor. The law is different in regard to a *Rural* District Councillor. A Rural District Councillor is also a Guardian of the Poor, and Section 20 of the Local Government Act, 1894, provides "A person shall not be qualified to be elected *or to be* a Guardian . . . unless he is a parochial elector (now Local Government elector. —*Ed.*) of some parish within the Union."

And by Clause 5 of Section 46 of the same Act, "A person disqualified for being a 'Guardian' shall also be disqualified for being a *Rural* District Councillor." Thus we see that under similar circumstances the office of *Rural* District Councillor could be declared vacant.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP.

Being an Address delivered by Mr. W. A. Spofforth, Labour Agent, Westhoughton, at a meeting of the Labour Agents of Lancashire and Cheshire, at Milton Hall, Manchester, Friday, January 16th, 1925.

PART II.
WHAT SATISFACTION HAVE I GOT FROM THE CAMPAIGN?

There are many advantages arising from a membership effort, and I will briefly enumerate a few of them. First of all there will be agreement amongst us that for an Agent to do useful work he must know as many of his people as possible—an Agent cannot get the most out of people if when an Election comes along he is a stranger to them. He should know their merits, their peculiarities, their outlook. Similarly, they can work with him better, and work for him, if they know him, though I will agree that to really know an Agent is somewhat of a problem. In this point at least I know the meeting will agree with me. Before leaving this question of knowing people and their value I should say that in our canvass Mrs. Crouchley made a special note of members who were more than usually interested, or more than usually informed, and of those too, who had been workers years ago and had given up the Party because of small achievements or little misunderstandings, and as Agent I made a point of making what seemed to them a casual call, but what was in reality a tactful beginning to get them in definitely as members. It seemed much appreciated and not only were workers made but friends by that means.

Another valuable piece of work accruing out of the campaign was the large number of Registration Claims discovered and which Mrs. Crouchley carefully noted and passed on to me—for this alone the effort was almost worth while. We too found how fine an opportunity was presented to do educational work in the homes visited, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that hundreds of Labour supporters got a deeper insight into Labour Party ideals, into Poor Law work, and of course, into the futilities, weaknesses and wickedness of other political parties! We found too, a generous spirit of goodwill and a desire to serve the Party, but in no case did we find new members expectant of receiving

sick or unemployment benefit in return for a shilling membership fee, as in one case reported to us from another Lancashire constituency rather less advanced than Westhoughton.

WHERE HAVE WE FOUND DIFFICULTIES?

It would be foolish and damaging to our prospects to ignore what has been disappointing, or to close our eyes to blunders we have committed. Our greatest difficulties are not in getting members, but in keeping them and in using them for the Party's good. The Agent for Westhoughton has had to be disillusioned in one or two things, and there may be other Agents to whom time and experience will bring disillusionment with regard to organisation and other things of importance. But that apart, we have difficulties, that of keeping in touch with new members, that of Local Parties neglecting them, the failure to look after renewed subscriptions, keeping out of office the incompetent ambitious, the bringing into office of the able and shy—those are a few of our problems. It is a sad experience to get a fine Ward membership numerically and to fail to find a leader amongst them—not even two or three to look after subscriptions—this difficulty I have to contend with. It is an annoying experience to get a fine rally of new members 80 or 90 strong, to have officers elected, and within three months to have that Ward rent asunder by jealousies and tactlessness, and a Napoleonic working of an arrested brain development. As regards keeping in touch with members, quite the best supplementary means to the Ward meeting, and which covers more homes, is to have a monthly paper, and I have brought along with me copies of a free paper which for six months was distributed by Ward workers to each individual member's house, and an enlargement of the same at a charge (1d.) which in September last superseded the free copy, but at the moment one cannot be certain of its permanence because of the difficulties of cost and circulation. There is no question whatever as to its being appreciated, but there will have to be a limitation sometime as to the number of spheres of work which a Labour Agent will have to qualify for.

CONCLUSIONS.

Let me briefly summarise the things that come to one after re-reading what I may have very imperfectly written.

First of all there seems to me to be many things which an Agent should avoid. Where is the Agent who has not prided himself on an organisation and found when it came to the test that it was merely a "paper organisation"? We should surely agree that the longer a man or woman acts as Agent, the less should he or she be liable to make that mistake and it should be guarded against. It cannot be doubted, I think, that the best way to look after your members is through the Ward unit, but from all over comes the report that the Ward organisation needs the Agent's constant attention and the constant propping up of its structure. It will respond to nothing but thoroughness—and I for one am aiming at (1) a Members' Ward Meeting monthly, (2) representatives to the Local Party meeting, (3) a syllabus, especially in winter, well-balanced with social and educational items, (4) a periodical visit from the Member or candidate, and (5) during the summer months just a few out-door meetings. I think that the Ward meetings agenda should be something on these lines: (1) minutes and correspondence, (2) report from local Party meeting, (3) report by Ward Councillor, (4) enrolment of new members, (5) arrangements for next meeting, etc. It may perhaps be necessary to relegate the business alluded to to an E.C., for some chairmen and speakers have a strange aptitude for making business items almost repugnant to those fresh to the movement, and in that event it would be far better for the E.C. to meet separately, deal with business, and for the members' meeting to have a brief E.C. report, and to spend that meeting's time on things alternately social and educational. I would suggest that the educational meetings deal with such subjects as (a) the Problem of Coal, (b) the Problem of Destitution, (c) the Problem of Widowhood, (d) the Problem of Health, etc.

There is a tendency—very pronounced in some districts—to forget that the Individual Membership is composed of men AND women, and my first point in this connection is that the men members of the Ward run the meetings, convene the meetings, and execute the business without any regard being paid to the women members—they do not know of the meetings, they are not invited, except when some catering requires doing—and the

only time they know of a Ward organisation is when renewal of subscriptions is called for. Only recently I attended quite a good meeting of these good men and it was not surprising to me to hear a report that some women had refused to renew their subscriptions because they got nothing in return. This is to me an extremely unintentionally silly way of attempting to carry on an organisation. One, too, comes across another method that seems foolish from the other extreme, i.e., sectionalism carried to excess, wherein Party meetings of representatives of (a) individual men, (b) individual women, and of course, representatives from the Labour Club and trade union branches and Trades Council cannot do anything without a mandate. If a social is proposed and a platform is needed, the Individual Men's Section must meet to decide as to whether they will put up a platform and the Women's Section must meet to decide as to whether they will arrange for refreshments, and then all the sections must meet separately to each send in nominations for the chairman of that evening; and so the whole thing is carried on—divided they stand, united they fall. Whereas, if all loved the Cause more than their sections, business could be done more rapidly, without jealousies, and with only the good of all in view. There is no wrong intent I am sure—simply the slavery of red tape.

But I am trespassing, I am touching the fringe of organisation when just membership should be my theme, but the two points are so closely related and indeed inseparable. I would indeed recommend Agents to take up this membership matter very seriously. If you can do it by the Party and from within the Party, well and good—some County Divisions might, and the Boroughs more easily still—but do it some way. If you employ a canvasser, and are as fortunate as I have been, you need not fear the question of finance for my experience is that not less than 20 per cent. will remain as a surplus. Get your Party meetings and cottage meetings and find your workers, concentrate on a Ward at a time, get out a list of your Labour pledges at the last election and canvass them first. Ask your councillors and workers to state the afternoon and evenings they can accompany your canvasser. In canvassing make a note of those who show a special interest in the Party

and in your own mind resolve that you are going to have them as workers. Don't be above showing an interest in what they are interested in, whether it is pigeon flying or gardening, and if you don't believe in gambling don't be such a prude as to be unaware of the name of the last Derby winner.

MAKE YOURSELF ONE WITH YOUR PEOPLE: BUT REMAIN YOUR OWN CAPTAIN.

Don't overlook the cases for your next register when you are on the membership canvass; don't let your membership be obtained from a narrow, circumscribed area; let your work be both wide and intensive. Don't forget to return to your finished Ward very soon with a well-arranged social evening. Let your local people be in the limelight, but be at the switch yourself. In your Ward Officers, don't hurry with the appointments until you know whom you want for the job, and if you have done the right thing (some may call it wirepulling), your members will elect your nominees. Don't let one person bear all the burden, he will either become an autocrat and kill the organisation, or he will become weary and the thing will die. Have regular social and educational evenings and if possible a news-sheet monthly in each member's home, but one of these things you MUST have: persons, like flowers unattended, either become weeds or die off. Be accessible to your people, your office may be ever so dingy, but if you are of the bright type it will be a home. That, if it be a bit burdensome at times, should be our gladly paid penalty in order to succeed with our work. It has been good of this meeting to ask me to deal with this question. I have no illusions that I am either the most capable, or that Westhoughton has succeeded beyond other Divisions, but what has been done and what we hope to do, I have done my best to tell you.

Political and industrial atmospheres vary. All cannot get the same results and in our division our membership returns have varied considerably. Aspull with 3,300 electors has given us 301 members. Blackrod with only 1,800 electors has given 329. Hindley with 11,000 electors has obtained 1,200, and Westhoughton with 7,000 has resulted in 975, but we do not let numbers be our obsession for it is not the numbers we get but the numbers we retain that matter, and more important still the number of workers that are created.

[Concluded.]

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TELLING THE TALE IN PRINT.

AN INSTRUCTIVE LECTURE.

This was the set subject for discussion at the London and Near Counties District monthly meeting held on Thursday, March 19th, at the Parliamentary Labour Club, Westminster. The chairman of the district, Mr. W. S. Rainbird (East Ham) opened the proceedings by producing a very interesting series of specimens of printing for all the varied purposes of an election and registration agent. They were mounted on large sheets of cardboard of uniform size, which made inspection and comparison very easy.

Mr. Rainbird was very insistent on the need for the greatest care in preparing printer's "copy" for the various requisites, and it was fairly well agreed that once you got a printer to understand what you wanted it was good policy to go to him for the particular article. As to colour, black on white was the least effective, unless you were using line blocks, when black on white could be used with very fine effect. Black on bright green was very effective, and arrested attention, as also did any poster if headed "Public Notice." The very great length of some election addresses prevented their being read beyond a few passages. A short address of crisp, brief sentences always secured attention as did portraits of candidates. But these considerations were subject to local conditions and the character of the constituency. Posters were most effective if they were well balanced and had one or two lines so arranged that curiosity was aroused. Commonplace words in big type to suit the convenience of the printer very often ruined the bill from a utility point of view, although otherwise pleasing to the eye. The various specimens exhibited were all thoroughly criticised according to the principles laid down by Mr. Rainbird, who clearly proved himself to be an expert at preparing printed matter.

Many of his theories were disputed, but in the main were admitted as "proven." He was heartily accorded thanks for his useful demonstration on the motion of Mr. C. Manning, L.C.C. (Camberwell, N.), seconded by Mr. H. Redgrove, B.Sc. (Croydon).

MAY-DAY DEMONSTRATIONS

AN EXAMPLE IN ORGANISATION.

The Nottingham Labour Party have been noted for the excellence and success of their May-Day Demonstrations, and this year's efforts bid fair to eclipse previous demonstrations. Many of our readers will be glad to know precisely how Nottingham achieves its success and from the following three circulars much can be gleaned of the inner organisation of it :—

NOTTINGHAM MAY-DAY
DEMONSTRATION.

Sunday, May 3rd, 1925.
March 6th, 1925.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

In connection with additional arrangements which have been made in connection with the above, I am instructed by the Committee to ask you to let me have at your very earliest convenience, some statement as to your Society's intentions regarding this year's demonstration, which, we think, will be of even greater magnitude than last year's successful event.

You are invited to take part in any or all of the following "competitive features" of the demonstration :—

(1) Best Decorated Car, Dray, or Vehicle. Prize : Silver Challenge Cup.

(2) Best "Associated" Display. This includes Co-operative Societies, Guilds, I.L.P., Communist, Ward Parties, Trades Council, Trade Unions, etc., and the prize will be awarded for the best "General Scheme" of each, which may include Decorated Cars, Banners and Bannerettes, Individual Fancy Dress, Women's and Junior Sections Display, etc., etc. Prize : Silver Challenge Shield.

(3) Fancy Dress. Purchase Coupon prizes value 10/- each will be presented to the lady and gentleman (one each), for the best Fancy Dress, Decorated Bicycle, or other suitable display of "individual" character. Dress or Display may suggest humour, if necessary, but not of that comic type which would interfere with artistic effect.

(4) May Queen. Each Ward Association, or Co-operative or other Society, is invited to select and suitably adorn a member's girl child of "school age," and to provide also the requisite "setting" of "Maids of Honour," etc., the whole to be grouped on a dray or other vehicle and arranged in such a tableaux as would represent a May

Queen and her Court. Each tableaux will take part in the procession, and on arrival at the Forest will be "judged" and the chosen "Queen" will be crowned. The other "Queens" will then be grouped around her as her "Maids of Honour," and all will be then officially photographed in order that a framed enlarged photograph may be presented to the selected "May Queen," with a smaller one for each of her "Maids of Honour." The successful Ward or Society will receive as prize a challenge cup to be held for one year.

As we are making arrangements for photography and cinema publicity if possible, we ask your special help in the way of bands and banners, etc., Splendid national speakers have been secured for the morning and evening meetings, and with your help we intend to flood the city with our Red Flowers. Really fine opportunity will present itself to Co-operative, Trade Union and Labour Societies for valuable publicity and advertisement, and we appeal for your best assistance in beating all previous records.

Hoping you will bring this matter before your Society as an item of special business.

On behalf of the May-Day Committee.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT BURY,
Secretary.

NOTTINGHAM MAY-DAY
DEMONSTRATION, 1925.

Sunday, May 3rd.
To Secretaries of Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies and Guilds, and Labour and Socialist Organisations, etc.

March 6th, 1925.

Dear Comrade,

We are anxious to secure the sale of not less than Twenty-Five Thousand Red Flowers in Nottingham in connection with our May-Day Demonstration this year, and we are asking your Society to help our effort by selling these flowers at the minimum price of 1d. each, in mines, factories, workshops, trade union meetings, and other assemblies, during the *Labour Flower Week*, April 26th to May 3rd.

As we are not allowed to sell the flowers in the streets during the week

your members can help us to overcome this difficulty by—

- (a) Organising "groups" of sellers inside mines and workshops.
- (b) By "individually" pushing them in factories, offices, etc.
- (c) By getting your Society to take definite quantities for sale through your organisation.

A successful sale of our "Red Badge of Courage" will enable the demonstration Committee to meet in a proper way the many very heavy expenses incurred, and will also act as a bond of sympathy between all sorts and conditions of workers wherever they meet each other during Labour Week. *You will notice them growing in huge numbers right up to Demonstration Day*—and you will feel proud to have helped us.

Hoping your Society will "enthusiastically" assist us individually and collectively, and that we shall immediately receive definite orders for quantities of Red Flowers.

I remain on behalf of the May-Day Flower Sales Committee,

Yours sincerely,
R. BURY,

15, Hanley St., Nottingham.

P.S.—We shall have flowers packed in two gross lots, but could also supply smaller lots if required.

1925 MAY-DAY DEMONSTRATION,
Sunday, May 3rd.
Flowers and Collections Sub-Committee.
March 6th, 1925.
To Secretaries of Wards, Women's Sections and Junior Sections.

Dear Comrade,

In order to secure proper organisation of "collections" at the Demonstration this year, we are asking Ward Associations and their Women's and Junior Sections to arrange "teams of five" collectors from each Ward—Women's or Junior Section—each "team" having a "captain" who will be responsible for the organisation of the "team," from the time that he or she collects the flowers, collecting boxes, collecting badges, etc., from this office (15, Hanley Street), right up to the handing in of the monies collected.

When you have arranged your "teams" you are requested to instruct the "team captain" to send in his or her address to this office, together with a statement as to the number of flowers required for sale at *not less* than one penny each (and as much more in your boxes as can be

gathered). A special prize of one guinea is to be presented to the "team" collecting the most money, so we do hope by the setting up of this spirit of healthy rivalry, for a record collection this year.

Hoping that each secretary will assist us by helping on the above-mentioned suggestions.

Yours on behalf of the May-Day Committee,

ROBERT BURY,
Secretary.

MR. CHAIRMAN—SIR !

A correspondent writes :—

Is it not time that in the Labour Movement we agreed on some form of address at public meetings which would meet all the requirements of the situation without causing (a) either a strain on the speaker and an injury to his self-possession, or (b) a titter among the audience.

There are a number of modes of address in common use. May I criticise them ?

"Mr. Chairman"—This is a stilted form which seems to ignore the audience, and the speakers who use it seem generally to be young men in a hurry.

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen"—Doesn't this rather infer that the chairman is neither a gentleman, and, of course, not a lady ? And why do some of our people resent being called "Ladies and Gentlemen" ?

"Mr. Chairman, and Friends"—Here again the chairman is left out in the cold. He is obviously not regarded as a friend.

"Mr. Chairman, and Comrades"—Again what has the chairman done that he is not a comrade ?

"Comrades"—The man who uses this address has generally got some home truths to tell ; comrades are going to get the rough edge of his tongue ! He ignores the chairman, who generally has to call him to order. Besides, what about the people who are not comrades ? Presumably they are not expected to listen.

"Mr. Chairman, Comrades and Friends"—The man who uses this address is, of course, the sort of fellow who would pour oil on troubled waters. He is "out" to catch all. But obviously the chairman is neither a comrade nor a friend ?

“Friends”—Here again, we have an often-used address which ignores, or does it include, the chairman? But it seems rather out of place in a hostile meeting, particularly if Communist interruption is expected! The man who uses it generally has a large manner.

“Mr. Chairman, Fellow Workers”—The chairman is, of course, obviously not a fellow worker! This address sounds horribly democratic in these days of court dress and high distinctions. It isn’t done, you know.

“Fellow Citizens”—This is a favourite mode of address at the municipal elections, but it has a German ring about it. The chairman, of course, goes hang. Kindred to this address are—“Mr. Chairman, Citizens of —” “Mr. Chairman, Electors of —.” Both more suited to a printed election address.

It is when a lady is in the chair that our speakers mostly get boggled. Thus we get:—

“Dame Chair”—Quite stilted. And what if the lady is young?

“Madam Chair”—To which the same applies. What a pity we have not got in English the French equivalent of mademoiselle.

“Lady Chair”—Which comes awkwardly and isn’t grammar.

Some of our speakers get over their difficulties by saying “Mrs. —” or “Miss —, Ladies and Gentlemen” with, of course, the variations above mentioned,—plus all the objections that there are to each.

But if in the Labour Party we get mixed what about some high-flown addresses I have heard on the other side? Here for instance:

“Mr. Chairman, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen”—which puts the lords before the ladies instead of after the gentlemen, as I would have it. Or,—

“Mr. Chairman, Ladies, Lords and Gentlemen”—which is more courteous. I have even heard—

“Your Grace, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen”—which is, of course, beginning with the sublime and ending up by being ridiculous. But the plum must surely go to—

“My Lord Duke, may it please your Grace, Ladies, Lords and Gentlemen”—After which we have no spittle left.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER MEMS.

We frequently receive requests for a complete list of local Labour newspapers, together with the editorial addresses of same. We are glad, therefore, now to be able to refer enquirers to an up-to-date list to be found in the Labour Year Book for 1925. Therein is to be found a compilation of all the Labour weekly and monthly papers, both local and national, and the list should prove very useful.

We note that “The Local Labour Monthly,” the official organ of the Carlisle Labour Party, noted in our last issue, has now chosen from the list of suggested titles, and from the March issue the paper has been known as the “Carlisle Labour News.” The second issue well bears out the promise of the first one.

“The Searchlight” is the title of a new four-page gratis monthly with a guaranteed circulation of 17,000 copies per month, issued by the Northwich Divisional Labour Party. We congratulate our friends upon their enterprise in embarking right away on such a large circulation and we note it is claimed that “The Searchlight” is the finest advertising medium in the county. The paper is distributed gratis throughout the important districts of Northwich, Runcorn, Middlewich, Winsford, Sandbach, etc., and those responsible for its editorship have certainly succeeded in producing a paper whose contents attract. A varied field is covered and pages three and four appear to have been edited with the praiseworthy object of attracting, where possible, several readers in one family. If this policy is continued the present already large circulation will account for a much wider circle of readers, and in this way the present advertising value will be much increased to the added prosperity of the paper. Taken altogether, the contents are bright, it is attractively printed, and we think it has a prosperous future. The paper is published by Mr. F. Parker, Labour Agent, Labour Hall, Northwich.

The “East Ham Town Crier” is another new four-page monthly, and is published for the North-East Ham Labour Party by Mr. W. Stewart Rainbird, the Agent, of Front Cottage, Katherine Road, London, E.6. In

this case 12,000 copies are guaranteed circulation each month, the claim being made of 20,000 readers in 12,000 homes. This estimate may prove under the mark provided the same policy is followed as is indicated above. There are a number of good points and several original ideas in the "East Ham Town Crier," and we would respectfully suggest that the editors of this paper and "The Searchlight" exchange copies, for there are features in both which would be an advantage to the other, and although the areas are entirely dissimilar the problem of editorship, if not of management, is very much akin.

RETURNING OFFICERS AND ELECTION ACCOUNTS

Arising out of the last General Election, several instances have been reported to us in which the Returning Officer appears to have been quite unacquainted with the limitations of his office in respect to the reception of election accounts.

We have before pointed out that a Returning Officer's functions are to receive the accounts when transmitted by the Election Agent, and to then publish the appropriate extracts. The officer has no statutory power at all either to enquire for the accounts, to question their accuracy, or to refuse them if the Agent fails to transmit them within the proper time, but transmits them at a later date. The Returning Officer has no power to require that the Election Agent shall go through the accounts with him or personally hand them in.

Our point is not to advise Agents to act in a curmudgeonly spirit towards the Returning Officer, or that they should resent a courteous reminder that accounts should be filed at a particular date. We would go further and suggest that if a friendly official offers his aid to the Agent in examining the accounts to see that the matters are in order, such friendly aid might be accepted or declined with the same courtesy with which the offer is extended.

But we have had definite instances submitted to us which shows that certain Returning Officers have adopted a high and mighty attitude and in their ignorance have actually transgressed the law. In one case that has come under our notice, accounts were

tendered within the time submitted, but *were actually refused* because they were unaccompanied with the candidate's declaration. Yet the candidate is by statute allowed seven days after the date for filing accounts during which he may file his declaration. In the case referred to, the candidate's declaration was obtained after considerable inconvenience. It arrived on the last day, after the Returning Officer's place was closed, and had our Agent known the ropes he could still have "transmitted" that night through the post and been in time. But as personal delivery had apparently been insisted upon the Agent kept the account till the following day when they were, of course, over date. Fortunately, in this case, explanations occurred at a later date, and the matter was satisfactorily cleared up.

In another case, we understand, that the accounts were only by great efforts filed on the last day, the insistence on the candidate's declaration having involved the candidate in a special journey from London.

Election Agents are themselves not always free from blame. We know of one case where an Agent had spent over £600, but filed a declaration that he had received only £50 for the purposes of the election. He had confused his own fee with the total of the election expenses! In most cases possible sources of friction and error could be avoided if Election Agents consulted the proper authorities within the Labour Party for advising them upon these matters.

IS YOUR AGENT A MEMBER
of the

**National Association
of Labour Registration
and Election Agents ?**

*(Acts as the Trade Union
for Labour Organisers)*

General Secretary: H. DRINKWATER,
Ladywood, Fernhill Heath, near Worcester

(Continued from page 11.)

I should say that a class ought never to exceed more than thirty in number. If it numbers more the chances of each one participating in the discussions are thereby diminished.

In conclusion, the success of the class largely depends on whether the tutor can create the right atmosphere. While a little humour is desirable undue levity is fatal. Students who treat the class as a joke should be politely informed that their room is more to be desired than their company. Speaking is an art and every art must be learned by serious application. And while criticism on the part of the students of each other's efforts may be frank, offensiveness must be sternly repressed.

The atmosphere to aim at is one of genial kindness and mutual helpfulness. Given that—and it rests mainly with the tutor—a Speakers' Class is one of the pleasantest and most useful bits of work in which an Organiser can engage.

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Congratulations to Agents W. Speakman, of Newton-le-Willows, W. M. Rogerson, of Eccles, and W. A. Spofforth, of Westhoughton, all of whom secured election to the Lancashire County Council. Mr. Speakman had a walk-over.

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